

NOV 27 1991

# Assessment Highlights



## Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Testing Program

June 1991

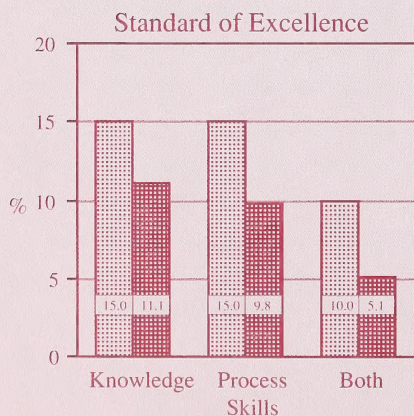
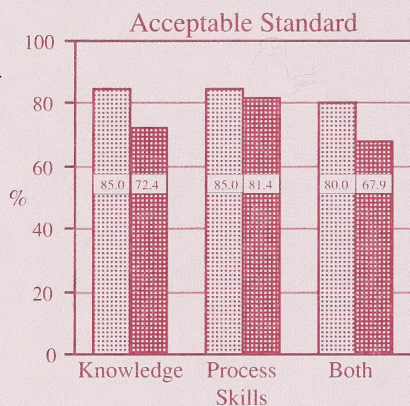


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#### Percentage of Students Achieving:



□ Achievement Standard\*    ■ Actual Results\*\*

\*the percentage of students in the province expected to meet the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence

\*\*the percentage of students in the province who met the Achievement Standard

#### Who Wrote the Test?

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#### What Was the Test Like?

The test had two parts:

Part A consisted of 60 multiple-choice questions worth 70% of the total test mark. The test assessed students' knowledge as well as their understanding and application of process skills.

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#### How Well Did Students Do?

Fewer students than expected demonstrated the knowledge and skills required in Grade 9 Social Studies. Not enough students met either the acceptable standard or the standard of excellence. More students met the acceptable standard in process skills than in knowledge. (See the graphs.)

Students' weak performance in recalling and applying certain basic facts and concepts in all three topics suggests that students have not learned the content of the course in sufficient depth. Students need a deeper, richer understanding of course content so that they will be able to see the relationships among the concepts and how this knowledge relates to the world beyond the classroom. As well, students must be encouraged through inquiry and discussion to use both their knowledge of course content and their critical thinking skills.



## Observations – Multiple Choice (continued)

### Standard of Excellence (continued)

Students achieving at this standard could

- readily extract information from a reading passage and use it to support their main idea
- identify an author's point of view in a reading passage (see question 7)
- make judgments using their knowledge of economic growth
- show a clear understanding of the effects of technology; for example, computer use in industry
- show a good understanding of the economic, social, and environmental implications of technology on our way of life.

Students achieving at this standard had difficulty

- interpreting source documents that presented highly abstract ideas and synthesizing the information (see question 9)
- recalling some basic facts and concepts.

## Observations – Written Response

### Assignment

Recycling is a growing concern in Alberta.

#### HOW SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA BE INVOLVED IN RECYCLING PROGRAMS?

In presenting your opinion, consider economic and environmental factors.

Your written response may take the form of a letter to the government, a speech to your class, a newspaper editorial, or a position paper.

To support your opinion, use examples and evidence from the Information to Consider on page 25, as well as from YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF ECONOMIC SYSTEMS.

Although the quality of writing in social studies is better in 1991 than in 1987, not enough students are meeting the acceptable standard. Teachers were disappointed with many of the papers that they marked. The markers' specific observations include the following:

- The majority of students had difficulty focusing on the issue. Writing was general rather than specific.
- A number of students confused the levels of government.
- Most students could state a position but had difficulty communicating ideas in support of their position.
- Students wrote with conviction; their writing indicated a sincere concern for the environment. They believed that government should play an important role in solving recycling problems but that government is not fulfilling this function adequately.
- A small number of clearly excellent papers were written. The quality of thought and expression far exceeded the expectations for Grade 9 Social Studies in these papers.

The Student Evaluation Branch is preparing a booklet comprising samples of the full range of student writing, the standards used in marking, and a discussion of the relative strengths and weaknesses in student writing. This will be sent later this year to schools that have students enrolled in Grade 9.

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Percentage Distribution of Scores  
by Reporting Category for Written Response

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	Support of Position	Expression
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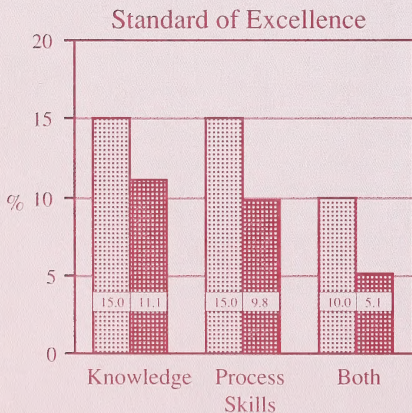


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## Has Achievement Changed Since 1983?

A special study of changes in achievement was conducted in 1991 as part of the provincial assessment. The results showed that achievement levels in 1991 were higher than in 1983 but have not changed since 1987. Details are reported in the 1991 *Provincial Report, Achievement Testing Program*.

## Test Blueprint

The test blueprint shows the distribution of questions according to the curricular content area (topic) being assessed and according to the knowledge and process skill objectives called forth by the question.

Grade 9 Social Studies  
1991 Achievement Test Blueprint  
Part A: Multiple Choice

	TOPIC/CONCEPT REPORTING CATEGORIES	TOPIC A			TOPIC B				TOPIC C			PROPORTION OF TOTAL SCORE
		ECONOMIC GROWTH: U.S.A.			ECONOMIC GROWTH: U.S.S.R.				CANADA: RESPONDING TO CHANGE			
	OBJECTIVE REPORTING CATEGORIES	INDUSTRIAL- IZATION	MARKET ECONOMY	QUALITY OF LIFE	GEOG- RAPHY	INDUSTRIAL- IZATION	CENTRALLY PLANNED ECONOMY	QUALITY OF LIFE	TECHNOLOGY	MIXED ECONOMY	QUALITY OF LIFE	
KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES	Understands generalizations, concepts, related concepts, terms, and facts	1, 2, 3, 19	10, 12, 17	13, 15	25	22, 23, 24, 32	29, 30	36, 37, 38	44, 49, 50, 51	43, 46, 52	55, 58	33%
PROCESS SKILL OBJECTIVES	Locating, interpreting, and organizing	7	4, 6, 16	20	21	40	27, 28	33	41, 42	54, 56, 57, 60		18.5%
	Analysing, synthesising, and evaluating	8, 9	5, 11, 18	14		26, 31	34, 35	39	47, 48, 53	59	45	18.5%
	PROPORTION OF TOTAL SCORE	8%	10%	5%	2%	8%	7%	6%	11%	10%	3%	70%
		23.3%			23.3%				23.3%			

## Test Results

The following table shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. There is a parallel table in the school and jurisdiction reports that teachers can use to determine the areas of strength and weakness of their students relative to the province as a whole.

Grade 9 Social Studies  
Results for Individual Multiple-Choice Questions

Item	Key	Diff.*	Item	Key	Diff.	Item	Key	Diff.	Item	Key	Diff.
1	A	79.0	16	A	49.9	31	D	57.1	46	B	53.1
2	B	43.9	17	B	71.9	32	B	70.0	47	C	78.0
3	D	59.0	18	A	66.1	33	D	76.8	48	C	77.3
4	A	85.4	19	C	79.3	34	C	51.6	49	B	78.2
5	B	58.6	20	A	72.1	35	A	52.1	50	B	66.0
6	D	56.6	21	C	64.2	36	A	53.4	51	A	73.6
7	C	65.4	22	B	69.7	37	D	54.0	52	D	53.3
8	A	65.9	23	A	49.0	38	B	77.6	53	C	83.9
9	B	53.4	24	C	69.2	39	D	52.9	54	B	64.5
10	D	50.3	25	B	53.5	40	A	32.0	55	A	89.8
11	B	62.1	26	D	54.3	41	D	56.6	56	A	52.8
12	B	54.1	27	B	50.1	42	D	32.4	57	D	40.2
13	C	61.8	28	C	67.1	43	C	52.9	58	C	78.3
14	D	55.9	29	A	47.9	44	B	56.1	59	B	70.1
15	B	66.9	30	A	81.5	45	A	60.4	60	A	78.3

\*Difficulty – percentage of students answering the question correctly




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5 B	58.6		20 A	72.1		35 A	52.1		50 B	66.0	
6 D	56.6		21 C	64.2		36 A	53.4		51 A	73.6	
7 C	65.4		22 B	69.7		37 D	54.0		52 D	53.3	
8 A	65.9		23 A	49.0		38 B	77.6		53 C	83.9	
9 B	53.4		24 C	69.2		39 D	52.9		54 B	64.5	
10 D	50.3		25 B	53.5		40 A	32.0		55 A	89.8	
11 B	62.1		26 D	54.3		41 D	56.6		56 A	52.8	
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## Observations – Multiple Choice

Students found the multiple-choice section of the test very challenging. The following is a discussion of specific areas of strength and of difficulty for Grade 9 students. Sample questions have been provided to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of students achieving at the acceptable standard and at the standard of excellence. For each sample question, the correct answer is marked with an asterisk. The percentage of students choosing each alternative is also provided.

### Acceptable Standard – Sample Questions and Commentary

38. The most general definition of quality of life is

- 5.9 A. your job satisfaction  
77.6 \*B. how happy you are  
4.9 C. your level of education  
11.6 D. how much money you have

**Question 38** required students to have a basic understanding of quality of life. Students achieving at the acceptable standard have a good understanding of this concept. Few students confused quality of life with materialism.

31. President Gorbachev's attempted reforms MOST CLOSELY parallel

- 6.5 A. Lenin's War Communism  
9.4 B. Stalin's collectivization  
26.8 C. Stalin's five-year plans  
57.1 \*D. Lenin's New Economic Policy

**Question 31** required students to apply their knowledge of historical events to current reforms in the Soviet Union. Results indicate that students achieving at the acceptable standard were unable to apply their knowledge of economic planning in this question; however, students achieving at the standard of excellence were clearly able to do so.

The strengths of students who demonstrated an acceptable standard of performance include:

- a basic, though limited, understanding of what a centrally planned economy – as in the Soviet Union before 1990 – is, of the meaning of quality of life, of primary industry in an economy, and of aspects of one's lifestyle (see question 38)
- an ability to make simple inferences.

Many students achieving at this standard had difficulty

- recalling and applying some basic knowledge as outlined in the course of study (see question 31)
- analysing, synthesizing, and evaluating sources of a more abstract nature.

### Standard of Excellence – Sample Questions and Commentary

Use the information below to answer questions 7 and 9.

#### Source I

Nearly every immigrant wanted to work and this caused tension between American-born workers and newcomers. Part of this conflict resulted from a lack of understanding of the causes of unemployment. Many American-born workers did not understand that they were being displaced because the tremendous changes in manufacturing had caused the mechanization of their jobs.

7. The MAIN point in source I is that

- 16.9 A. immigration led to the mechanization of American industries  
4.0 B. workers tended to be more close-minded and racist than other people  
65.4 \*C. workers lost their jobs to machines but blamed immigration  
13.6 D. owners hired more immigrants because they were willing to work for less

**Question 7** required students to identify the main point in source I. A fair percentage of students achieving at the acceptable standard were able to identify the main idea, whereas a high percentage of students achieving at the standard of excellence were able to do so.

#### Source II

American-born workers resented the immigrants, who were willing to work for less money. They grew angry because they felt their demands for higher wages and better working conditions were threatened by immigrants who were eager to work under any conditions. The competition between American-born workers and immigrants became intense as immigration increased and the worker population expanded one-third faster than the total population.

9. Based on both sources, what generalization can be made about immigration and economic growth?

- 35.1 A. People move to areas where the economy is expanding.  
53.4 \*B. Workers often believe that immigration creates unemployment.  
5.0 C. More skilled workers than unskilled workers tend to immigrate.  
6.3 D. Immigration has lowered profits and slowed the growth of factories.

**Question 9** required students to use a higher level cognitive process. They had to select the generalization that could be made based on the two sources. Many students achieving at the acceptable standard and some students achieving at the standard of excellence had problems selecting the correct generalization. Too many students in both groups were drawn to the first alternative.

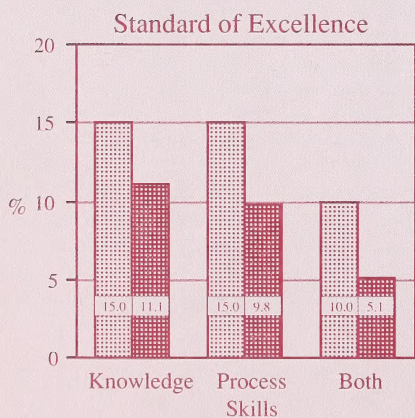
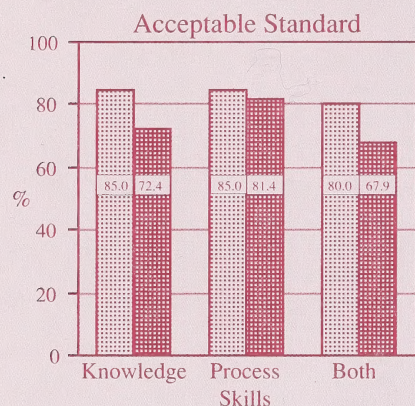


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## Observations – Written Response

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## Issues

During the 1991 Grade 9 Social Studies marking session, teachers were asked to comment on the test. Here is what they said:

- Motivation of Students

"I thought in 99% of the papers I marked students gave [it] a good try. Students responded to the writing assignment with a positive and sincere concern toward recycling."

"I was pleasantly surprised at how few of them treated it in a flippant manner."

"Most took the topic seriously and tried to present a logical viewpoint that they could support. I was encouraged by what I saw."

"This form of assessment is fine, but it **must** have some effect upon the students' actual mark, or many simply do not care to do their best."

"Students, like anyone, need motivation. Their responses depended on how valuable the students found the experience of writing the test. Overall ... 3!!!"

- Addressing the Topic

"Many of our Grade 9 students write creatively. I was impressed with the expression in most papers but disappointed with the substance."

"Most students seem to have a reasonably good grasp of the problem of waste management, and some realistic solutions were evident."

"Students responded on an emotional level. They did not bring into the question their knowledge of economic systems."

"I felt that generally students seemed to copy a lot of the given data instead of taking it and using it to provide fuel for their arguments."

"Students tend to formulate their opinions on hearsay information and lack good judgment about political/government processes."

"Most students could deal adequately with the topic."

- Time Provided

"Students can and will do a much better job if given more time to plan, write, and rewrite. They need the time to go through the steps they have been taught in class."

"They found that they were a bit rushed for time."

"Sufficient time was provided for all my students to complete the test."

## Recycled Paper: Recycling the Achievement Test

When responding to the assignment, a few students asked whether the achievement tests were printed on recycled paper.

Although we used new paper, there is no waste because all materials discarded by the branch are sent for recycling. You can expect to see the recyclable or recycled logo on all our materials from now on.

For further information contact Valerie Doenz, Social Studies Test Development Specialist, at 427-0010.

